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THE
MAN AND METHOD

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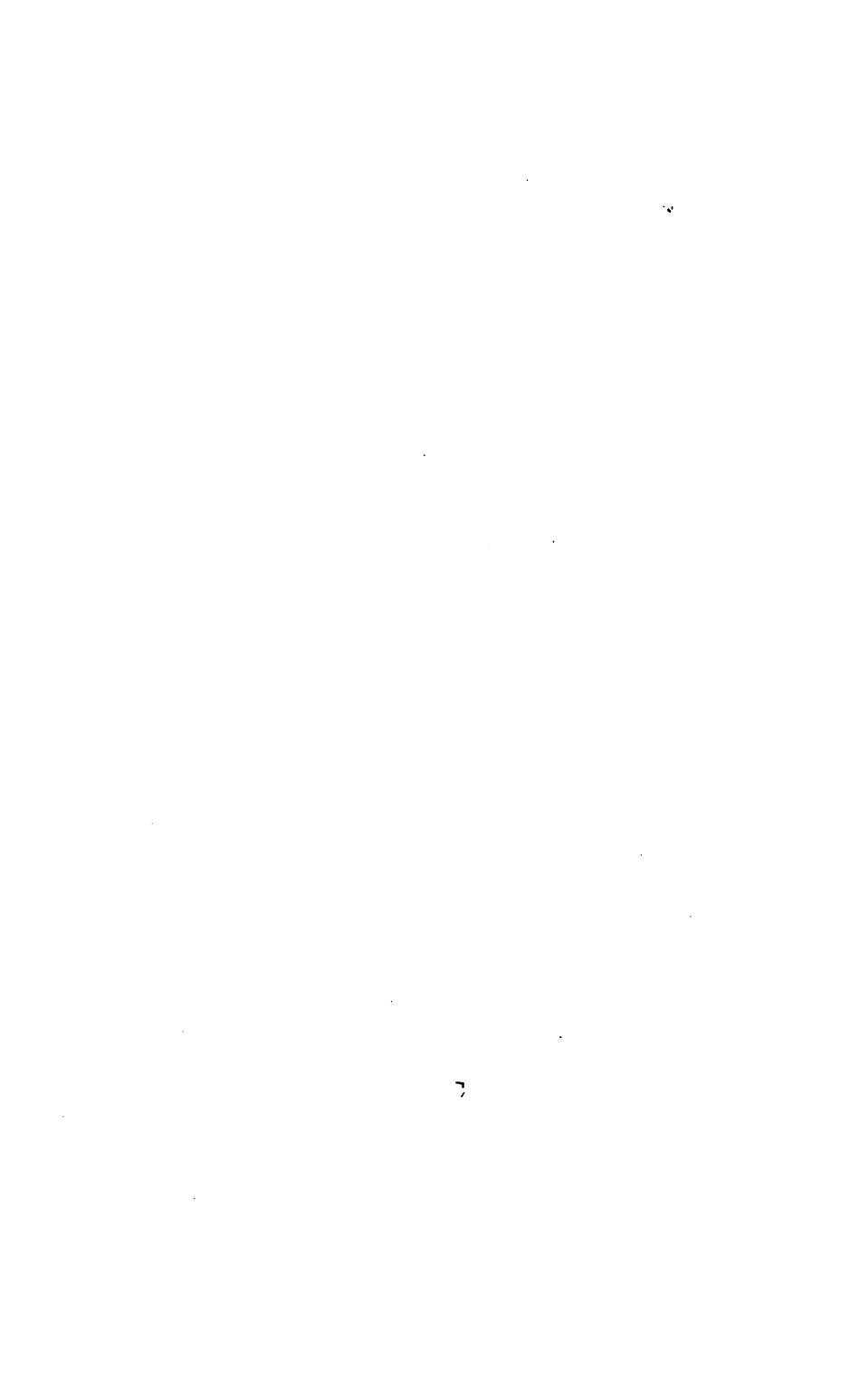
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BILLY SUNDAY

THE

MAN AND METHOD

BY

THE REV. FREDERICK W. BETTS, D.D.

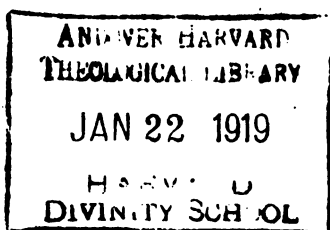
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The publication of the following series of articles in *The Universalist Leader* attracted much attention among readers in all churches, and the demand for their gathering into a more convenient and permanent form has been imperative.

In order not to weaken their spontaneous force, no change has been made in the original wording and make up.

It should be understood that these articles were written during and immediately following the Sunday campaign in Syracuse, New York, while the author, as pastor of a local Universalist church, was in close personal touch with the whole situation, and that he has approached his task in a firm yet Christian spirit, seeking to point out not only the errors and evils of a particular campaign, but to emphasize the need of a genuine religious awakening throughout the world.

PREFACE

Billy Sunday is the personification of some of the most difficult and perplexing problems of contemporary religion. He is where he is, and his movement is what it is, because of conditions which run wide and deep into the vital fabric of organised Christianity as it exists to-day in America. A thorough analysis of all that is involved would require a history of Protestant denominationalism during the last fifty years. Such a study would be dry as dust to most people. Grouped around Mr. Sunday, illustrated by his methods, the story is vivid and interesting. The difficulty is to give a true impression. Mr. Sunday arouses intense emotions and elemental passions. He divides men into two camps. One is filled with his friends, the other is filled with those who cannot see any good thing in him or in his works. Before Mr. Sunday came to Syracuse I resolved that under no circumstances would I permit him to make me intolerant. I knew the harsh and ugly things he would say about that faith in the everlasting love of God which is my joy and my life. But, in the midst of it all I have tried to "see things whole and see things straight," which Matthew

PREFACE

Arnold said is a primary condition of all candid, just and helpful criticism. If any friend of Mr. Sunday thinks I am too severe in anything I have written in this little book let me say to him earnestly that I have set naught down in malice. I have tried to detach myself so that I might convey to both the apologists and the critics of Mr. Sunday a clear impression of what I saw, and heard, and understood, of a campaign which has in one or another way left its influence behind it for good or ill, or both, in the city where my life work as a Christian minister has been almost entirely spent.

F. W. B.

BILLY SUNDAY

THE MAN AND METHOD

I

THE editor asks me to write for the *Leader* my impressions of Mr. Sunday and his work. To-day begins the seventh and last week of his campaign in Syracuse. During that six weeks I have lived close enough to what Mr. Sunday is doing to feel the effect of his work. The tabernacle is only six blocks from our house. It stands between us and the "down town" section of the city. The getting off or on place, to or from the tabernacle, is on our street car line. We see the crowds as they come and go. We hear the conversations and comments. We have attended services at the tabernacle. We have had Mr. Sunday and his associates at a crowded noon meeting of our Rotary Club. The total impression is very vivid, but it is made up of a number of contributory impressions.

In order to get the total impression we must go somewhat into details. This may require more space than can be used for one article in the

Leader. If so I shall not hesitate to use whatever space is necessary, if the editor will permit. I have one request to make of the reader. Do one of two things. Either read what I write through to the end, or abstain from any judgment upon what I write. One of the radical effects of Mr. Sunday's work is to sharpen the edge of opinions and arguments. One-sided views do not get us far. What we must have if we are to understand Mr. Sunday and his work is a certain detachment, the ability to stand off and look at him with some comprehension of the total significance of it all as a social phenomenon which is inseparable from a multitude of other social phenomena.

First of all, then, Billy Sunday's work is a social phenomenon. It is as truly and vitally a social phenomenon as the Standard Oil Company, the Great War, or the Roman Catholic Church. This tabernacle with its crowded seats, its trail hitters, its great scenic effects, is a social growth, the roots of which run down deep into the soil. One illustration of what I mean will be sufficient for opening a wide vista. The Billy Sunday movement grows out of and flourishes because of certain significant conditions which exist in the Protestant churches of the United States. I have been for twenty-five years a member of the Ministers' Association of Syracuse. Mr. Sunday was invited to Syracuse

by about fifty ministers and churches. Every prominent minister who is in the Sunday movement is a member of that Ministers' Association. I doubt if there are five ministers in the fifty who are outside of the Association. During this twenty-five years there had developed between the members of that Association a very fine fellowship. We were frank and confidential. We talked over together every interest of our churches and of our spiritual experience. Now I know these ministers better than they know themselves, in some things. It is very clear to me why they wanted Mr. Sunday. They wanted him for two very definite reasons. They wanted him first of all because they had grown into a definite conviction of the impotence and failure of themselves and of their churches, beyond a certain point. They had come to feel, deeply and regretfully, that they and their churches were not really reaching the people or the soul of Syracuse. Not once, or twice, or ten times, but fifty or a hundred times during the last few years, in our discussions at the meetings of the Ministers' Association, or in personal confidences at the lunch table afterward, have I listened to statements and discovered minor keys of thought which revealed the fact that the ministers were conscious that they were making only a very small impression upon the community outside the very limited congregations of

most of their churches. Some of the confessions of personal inability to reach "the people," or "the crowd," have been really pathetic. They were anxious, over anxious, for any one who could reach and win the great outside multitude, and bring them into the church.

The ministers and churches wanted Mr. Sunday, and were anxious that he should bring the multitude into the church for a second reason which they never spoke of frankly, but which was in the back of many of their minds. They wanted, and needed, and they still need, a great increase in financial resources. A member of one church said to me, "We expect — members from the Sunday meetings." It was a large number. And in a moment came the comment, "We have a big financial load to carry in our church." They are not exceptional. The exception is the other way. One of the reiterated arguments of the managers of Mr. Sunday's campaign has been this promise of increased pew holders and financial prosperity. Looking beyond this argument, one can see a number of churches in the city whose future is very uncertain, and where already there is severe financial pinch. A man or movement was wanted in Syracuse which could reach the crowd, bring in members, fill the treasury, and lift the churches from the deep rut of a conventional, limited, starved financial and spiritual life. This want

was the sequel of a dismal sense of failure concerning the big things of church and community life, on the part of many influential ministers.

So Mr. Sunday and his associates came, six weeks ago, and are with us yet. We heard the thunder of the big guns long before we caught sight of the uniforms. Mr. Sunday was in Omaha. From there he or his press agent bombarded Syracuse for days and weeks before the real campaign began. Word came that he would have the miserable sinners of Syracuse eating out of his hand before he was done with his meetings here. Curiosity was aroused, fed, stimulated up to the pitch of real excitement in spots. All the devices of the shrewd advertiser were used, with telling effect. Finally the date and hour of his appearance were announced. Plans for a big reception were arranged. Invitations went out from the churches for automobiles. The name of the church from which it came was printed in big letters, on canvas, on each automobile. Report gives the number of automobiles in the parade as up in the hundreds. The streets of the city where the parade passed were lined with crowd of spectators. Traffic on those streets was prohibited by the police. A fine house, once the home of a United States Senator, had been selected for the Sunday party while they were here. The parade of automobiles passed slowly along the main street of the

city, with Mr. Sunday standing up in one, bowing and smiling, and waving his hat to the crowd. The parade went past the house where the Sunday party was to live. Mr. Sunday got out, stood on the curb, and reviewed the procession as it came back around the fountain at the head of the street, into the heart of the city once more, where the long row of automobiles disintegrated. It was a case of the conquering hero going forth at the head of his cohorts. All it needed was the uniforms and the white plume of Navarre to make it seem like a real pilgrimage of the hosts of the Lord, on the way for a joust—with Satan and his cohorts.

The stage was set. The characters fell into their places. The curtain went up for the first act of the most interesting spectacular performance this city has ever witnessed.

II

I HAVE said that the stage was set, the actors were in their places, and the curtain went up for the first act of the greatest spectacular performance which Syracuse ever witnessed. That statement is to be taken literally, at its full face value. Considered from any point of view the fact is that the Sunday campaign as it is carried out is a gigantic spectacular performance where all the scenic effects are carefully considered and elaborately worked out.

Imagine a great low-roofed wooden structure, capable of seating 12,000 people. The seats are wooden benches. The posts are small timbers, not more than 6x6 or 8x8, so that they do not obstruct the view. The whole great tabernacle is strewn with saw-dust. The smell of the wood rises almost like incense. The aisles lead straight down the whole length, and in from the sides. They all center before a platform which stands three-fourths of the way down toward the far end of the tabernacle. This platform is perhaps twenty or more feet square. It is raised about ten feet from the ground. The only furniture on it regularly is a plain wooden pul-

pit and an ordinary chair. Above it hangs a great sounding board. Half way below it, to one side, is another platform on which stands a fine piano. On either side of the platform and just behind is space for reporters and ministers. Beyond them ascend the rows of seats where the great chorus make an ascending mountain of human faces, banked clear to the roof. The tabernacle is packed. Fourteen hundred Masons and their wives have reserved seats at the center and front. Rows of people are standing. Hawkers are everywhere selling the Billy Sunday singing book. The crowd is quite respectable. It is comfortably dressed, well behaved. It is not unlike what you would find in any democratic church, on any Sunday morning.

At 7.15 there appears on the platform a man with a big horn in his hand. He is a big, round, smiling fellow and appears about forty or forty-five years old. This day Syracuse and Colgate Universities have met in a football battle at the Stadium, before 20,000 people. On the horn in the man's hand is fastened a streamer a yard long. It carries the colors of the victorious team. University students occupy one section of the tabernacle. The man with the horn waves it in the air, calls on the students for their yell, turns to a group of shop-men for their yell also, sets the sound rolling over the big crowd, calls for the favorite song of this or that group,

leads with his voice and his horn, with piano and great chorus joining in. The songs are mostly old revival favorites. "Coronation" and "Jesus Lover of My Soul," with a half dozen others, are caught up and swept forward with a lilt and enthusiasm which are contagious. Then some one calls for "Brighten the Corner Where You Are." This is the favorite. It is sung in part, by sections, then by the whole great audience.

Thirty minutes have passed since the singing began. It is almost 7.45. During that half hour "Rody" has accomplished his task, and it is a great task. "Rody" is the artist of the Sunday combination. And "Rody" is an artist. He is an artist from the tips of his fingers and the end of his toes to the tip of that big horn and to the last layer on that fine crown of dark brown curly hair. He is musical in speech and in action. He is gentle, gracious, smiling. His voice is soft and clear. Every movement is rhythmic. He walks, he moves his arms, he swings his body as he goes, with a certain undulating movement which reveals his corporal self as a fit expression for his song. He has taken that vast audience, brought from homes, factories, stores, lodges, composed of every social type, save the lowest, and he has put them into the melting pot of music. The result is very interesting. It is unifying through and

through. He took those 12,000 fragments and he has softened and congealed them into one vast lump of humanity. Now he has them ready to turn over to Mr. Sunday.

And Mr. Sunday is there waiting for the job. He came there five minutes ago, while the crowd was singing the first strains of "Brighten the Corner Where You Are." He climbed up to the back of the platform, walked across it, and has been leaning on that little wooden pulpit for the last five minutes. He is all nerves and all smiles. It is almost impossible for him to keep still two seconds. He looks this way and that, turns this way and that, all animation, all suppressed excitement, like a leashed hound waiting for the unloosing of the hand of his master.

When the song ends there are no preliminaries, "devotional exercises," or delays whatsoever. In thirty seconds Mr. Sunday is at it. He stays at it for forty or forty-five minutes. During that time he is at it all the time, so that at the end he has a soiled and saturated handkerchief in his hand, mopping off the sweat. He took "dope," at one place, and lopped over the pulpit. His snoring could be heard all over the tabernacle. At another place he took poison, and after a few contortions he fell dead upon the platform. It was all deftly, artistically, dramatically done. That fall was the fall of a trained performer. He came back from it

with a spring that set him on his feet and at work in a second. Up in the chair, one foot, or both, on the pulpit, flat on the floor, limping with a broken leg, shooting a gun, throwing a stone from David's sling to "knock the block off Goliath," these and more than fifty-seven more varieties of like or unlike things, enter into the process of preaching by Mr. Sunday. It is a continuous performance. You wonder how any man can keep it up and live. You hear reports of what the doctors say will happen to Mr. Sunday soon. But there he goes with his acrobatic performances. He tells a story. Sometimes the story is an old familiar one from the Bible. Sometimes the story reminds you of a barroom encounter of wits. He fits the action to the word. The story lives before your eyes. Men love, hate, pray, curse, all in lightning succession of telling phrases and remarkable pantomime. This man is an actor. He is dramatic art personified. He understands the telling effect of the use of every part of his body. He is alive with the purpose to preach his gospel with every faculty of his organism. And he does it.

The one weak spot in Mr. Sunday, considered as a platform man, is his use, or misuse, of his voice. His manner is that of the lightning vaudeville story teller. Word follows word, story follows story, action follows action, like

that brook which runs on forever. If he ever thinks between his words it is not on the platform. He does not seem to possess one iota of the consciousness of the value of pause. There is no pause. There is a gallop, a clatter and rattle of words. Another illustration may give a clearer impression. Look at a group of men feeding a machine gun on the firing line. Imagine the stream of bullets which are shot in quick succession. Count every bullet a word, 200 or more a minute, and you have Mr. Sunday in action, vocally. The voice is raucous, harsh, over-strained. There is nothing attractive about it. He pitches it up where a professional story teller on the stage pitches his voice. It is almost absolutely devoid of the quality of gentleness, softness, sympathy or winsomeness. It is keyed to the ideas and the aims of the campaign. It is strident, domineering, arrogant, in its minor key. It is insistent, uncompromising, harsh and even repellent in some of its notes.

But he holds you. This may not last. It does not last when once you detect something that I will mention later. But if you have never heard Mr. Sunday and you happen into the tabernacle too late to get a seat, and you find yourself standing away back, the chances are that you will stand there an interested listener while for three-quarters of an hour he proceeds

with the rapid-fire, perpetual-motion process of driving into you his ideas. He is unlike anybody else. He is original, vital, hot, impatient, intolerant. He races and rages and turns all sorts of somersaults. And for six weeks he has packed that tabernacle to overflowing, with three crowded audiences each Sunday, and overflow meetings. The whole situation can be summed up in a sentence. Two weeks ago a prominent English Unitarian minister was in Syracuse over Sunday. He went with a friend to hear Mr. Sunday. He sat through it all. "Rody" led the singing. Sunday pranced and preached. A goodly number hit the sawdust trail. The Englishman made no sign until, well out on the street beyond the departing crowd, he suddenly and abruptly ejaculated, "A most astonishing performance." Yes, a most astonishing performance, any way you look at it.

III

IN order to understand how Mr. Sunday can come into a city like Syracuse, with its 150,000 population, and for seven weeks pack a tabernacle with from 12,000 to 14,000 people seven times each week, requires a study of his methods of organization and advertising. No such system as Mr. Sunday has developed could be put in operation in a day or a year. It is a growth. It is the result of twenty years of development. Mr. Sunday never misses a chance for a fling at evolution, but his campaign and the system behind it are as fine an example of evolution as one often sees.

Let us go back. Three years ago a committee of ministers went from here to request Mr. Sunday to come to Syracuse. The negotiations involved a number of important things. If he came a tabernacle must be built for him, and all the churches in the movement must be closed on Sundays during his meetings. He must have the field. Nearly a year ago the churches in the movement, along with a few individuals and corporations, guaranteed the cost of the tabernacle. This was not far from twenty thousand dollars. This guarantee was cashed. Mr. Sun-

day's tabernacle builder came to the city late in the summer and the building was started. Soon after Sept. 1, Mr. Sunday's advance agent or organizer came to the city. He remained here until Mr. Sunday came. He was a busy man. From morning to midnight he went up and down the city. He visited and spoke at all the churches, at clubs, at social gatherings, wherever he could get a hearing. He schooled the ministers in the Sunday methods. Committees of all sorts were organized. The city was divided into districts of forty houses, some say twenty houses. In each of these districts prayer-meetings were held.

Then came the directing of public curiosity toward the tabernacle. The Chancellor of Syracuse University dedicated it. About Oct. 1 notices were sent to all the Protestant churches in the city that on Sunday, Oct. 24, in the afternoon, there would be a big parade of laymen from all the churches in the city. The invitation was very broad, and it was not associated directly with the Sunday meetings. But when the parade came off it ended in the tabernacle, with a great burst of enthusiasm for the Sunday campaign. The next Sunday, Oct. 31, Mr. Sunday came. The whole community had been touched by some factor in the movement which was gathering every possible influence around what was to happen.

There is another side to the Sunday system, from the publicity point of view. This is the newspaper end of it. I know something of how this was arranged, and I confess to a large measure of admiration for any man who can get the newspapers to work for him as Mr. Sunday does. Before he came, and since he came, day after day, week after week, whole pages and pages and pages of the newspapers have little else than Mr. Sunday's sermons, or pictures of Mr. Sunday himself in some one of the hundred postures he assumes while "in action."

[There are rumors of how these photographs of Mr. Sunday "in action" are obtained. They represent him in almost every position except standing on his head. They are furnished the newspapers wholesale, and they are sometimes big enough to cover half a page. The Sunday company comprises fifteen persons, besides the good cook who comes along with them. These fifteen are photographed singly, in pairs, in groups, and these pictures are inserted in reports of all sorts of addresses, at all sorts of meetings, in all sorts of places. Every nook and corner is canvassed for an opening for Mr. Sunday, "Rody," or some other member of the staff. It is an interesting game to watch. After many years in Syracuse I am "a joiner," and it is simply marvelous to see how unexpectedly the invitation to hear Mr.

Sunday breaks. At the Rotary Club lunch a brother Rotarian from Blank City was introduced for "a word of greeting." It ended with "You ought to hear Mr. Sunday when he comes to Syracuse." From the public school authorities to the presidents of clubs, masters of lodges, heads of corporations, and members of various groups of professional men, all are invited, and if that is not enough they are urged and importuned to hear Mr. Sunday. It seems as though the committee in charge had a card index of "Who's Who," with a tabulated list of all their associations. And not a thing seems to be left undone that will get hold of any group which can be persuaded to go and hear Mr. Sunday.

At the Tabernacle all is arranged with regard to scenic effects and vivid impressions. Reservations are made at the services. One evening it is University night. Another evening the best reservations are for the Masons; 1400 Masons, including their wives, meet on a prominent corner and march to the tabernacle. These are samples of a plan of working up attendance such as I have never witnessed in any movement in all my life.

Then there are out of town nights. To-night a special train will come from Auburn. Tomorrow one will come from Oswego, or Cortland, or Rochester, or Watertown. A territory

✓ of more than one hundred miles in diameter is tapped to find the tabernacle audiences and keep up the enthusiasm. Not an item of what is happening is unexploited for publicity. The number of people from a certain city, the numbers of auto parties, the list of visiting ministers, the expected committees from places that are anxious to obtain the services of Mr. Sunday, these are a few of the items that are placarded from day to day at the head of the newspaper reports of the meetings. Along with this is a cumulative report of the amount of collections and the number of "trail hitters" from day to day. The figures are carried along in comparison with cumulative reports of the results from day to day in Omaha, where the last series of Sunday meetings were held.

And finally we come to the biggest item in this whole publicity campaign. Remember that a committee representing practically all of the so-called Evangelical Protestant churches in the city, over fifty in all, has been to each editor before Mr. Sunday came. That is a big lump of public opinion. The publicity program has been laid out. Now Mr. Sunday is a wise chap. He has had his experiences in the past and he has profited by these experiences. Some of us know the kind of reports of our sermons that we get in the press on Monday if we leave these reports to some unofficial patriot. Mr. Sunday

copyrights all his sermons. The whole series, for the seven weeks campaign, is fed to the newspapers. The copy is in a day or two ahead of publication, with a time limit for unloosing the proof sheets. These copyrighted reprints of Mr. Sunday's sermons are not the sermons which he preaches. They purport to be, and so far as multitudes of newspaper readers are concerned they are such reports. But really the copyrighted reports are not the sermons spoken in the tabernacle. They follow the same line of thought. Often they are verbatim reports of what is spoken on the platform. But any newspaper reporter at the tabernacle will tell you that the spoken and the copyrighted sermons are two quite distinct things. I can testify to this. In the copyrighted report of Mr. Sunday's famous sermon on Amusements, as he furnished the proof for publication in the newspapers, there was a paragraph in which he squarely and without qualification stated that in his opinion the way to deal with the social evil is by segregating all the women in one district, under police supervision. Along with this opinion was a sneer for those reformers who lacked horse sense in such matters. After a five years campaign Syracuse has wiped out its "segregated district," and that opinion of Mr. Sunday was morally out of date with us. I called attention to this statement by Mr. Sun-

day. He did not meet the issue candidly. I understand that in his spoken sermon he omitted this paragraph. But it went out in the printed report, and I have a copy of a newspaper printed in a city far away, in which appears Mr. Sunday's copyrighted opinion in favor of segregation. Mr. Sunday went on to the platform here immediately following my public comment on his opinion in favor of segregation, and denounced as a liar anybody who said that he ever spoke in favor of segregation. I had been very careful to state the fact that his own copyrighted printed report carried the opinion. He did not, so far as I can learn, ever refer to this printed report. He simply walked away from it. The incident is worth mentioning only to illustrate the elaborate method of preparing material for publicity, which is part of a long developed and carefully arranged campaign, and also to illustrate this fact, that it is publicity and not accuracy which Mr. Sunday is most interested in.

Looking at it all in all, going back to the preliminaries and following the scheme all through its ramifications, this has been the most extensive and thorough campaign of advertising that I have witnessed or watched in all my experience. It would seem as though a Punch and Judy show that could get such publicity would draw a crowd. Certain it is that when such

publicity makes all the streets of Syracuse converge out there where that big, low-roofed, sawdust-floored tabernacle exhibits day after day such a combination as this musical "Rody" and this gyrating, dancing dervish with his wonderful flow of words, his marvelous dramatic gift as a story teller, and his hot, burning, fanatical zeal, you may expect the crowd to come, gape, and go away to come again. Which they did here in Syracuse to the number of 911,000 attendants and 21,155 "trail hitters" in seven weeks.

Later, and at a distance of time far enough to get the perspective true, I shall, if the editor will permit, give my impressions of the Sunday meetings at long range, and with reference to permanent results. I am "following up" the cards which came to me. When I know how we come out I shall know better how to deal with some things not touched upon so far. Last of all, I wonder if the crowd has not persuaded Mr. Sunday that he is a prophet sent from God. I wonder how many of us could or would remain modest and humble if we had been steeped for years in the kind of adulation and hero worship that have surrounded Mr. Sunday day and night during his stay in Syracuse.

IV

It is Monday morning as I write these words. Last night, at 10.10, Mr. Sunday and his party left Syracuse, after a seven weeks campaign. Mr. Sunday carried a draft for \$23,155 as the "thank offering" of the people for his work here. The party will scatter for Christmas at their homes. Then to Trenton, N. J., to repeat the campaign as it was carried on here.

The time is not yet for a just and final estimate of Mr. Sunday's work in Syracuse. That is another story for another day, as Kipling would say. I have not yet gone over carefully the few cards of "trail hitters" which record Universalist as their preference. Let us therefore hold in reserve our final judgment. But there are very clear and very deep impressions which are already made. Some of these will be worth mentioning. I set them down dispassionately, as they have been made week after week by what has been going on.

The first and fundamental impression is that the theology of Mr. Sunday is the same old hell-fire and damnation theology that revivalism has always exploited. My memory runs back

through a youth spent in a neighborhood where we had our periodical "series of protracted meetings," as they were called. The theology preached in those meetings was a very crude, vivid, horrible mass of fearful warning. Under the cover of the acrobatic performances and the endless stories of Mr. Sunday are imbedded all the gross and barbaric ideas of those revival meetings of long ago. Only in one particular is there any important change. Even Mr. Sunday is unwilling to say that God damns men forever, so he shifts the responsibility. He urges and repeats that God wants to save us, but can not, and if we go to hell, it is all our fault. Yet in one sermon I saw him describe the awful tide of Divine wrath sweeping down on him like a flood. He acted out with remarkable effect how he crouched down and hid behind Jesus, whose blood, he said, saved him from that dreadful cyclone.

The second keen impression is that the Sunday meeting has awakened a spirit of intolerance such as I have not witnessed in Syracuse these many years. Let me be personal for a moment. I have been patient, serene, good-natured, through all this fuss. I have seen clearly that Mr. Sunday could not harm my church. On the contrary, he has driven some very weak-kneed Universalists to take a stand. Later I shall try to record just how far this

will permanently affect us. But in spite of my efforts to keep sweet there has been no lack of evidence that old friends were alienated, and some of them made very bitter. The telephone has brought harsh criticism because I could not join in the Sunday meetings. One friend of many years, an intimate friend and a very noble fellow, has stated that I am trying to defeat the work of Jesus Christ in Syracuse. On my desk is a letter which contains this sentence, "If there is no hell what are you preaching for? If there is, what about the souls you are sending there by your preaching?" These are samples of a spirit with which the city is saturated. It will take a long, long time to outgrow it. The many years of our Christian fellowship together have come to an abrupt end, temporarily at least. It is even rumored that the ministers interested in the Sunday meetings are considering a permanent Evangelical Association, abandoning the Ministers' Association, in order to leave out a little group of "liberals." That won't work. There is some sense left. But that it should be mentioned after the history of the last twenty-five years in Syracuse reveals a revival of religious intolerance which is deplorable.

The third impression is that of the rawness, even coarseness, of Mr. Sunday. I did not attend the meetings for women. But many of our friends did. The meetings for men come under

the same conclusion. Many of the things said and done bordered upon things prohibited in decent society. The sermon on amusements was preached three times, to mixed audiences of men and women, boys and girls. If the sermons to women had been preached to married women, if the sermons to men had been preached to mature men, if the sermon on amusements had been preached to grown folks, there might have been an excuse for them, and perhaps good from them. But an experienced newspaper reporter told me that the sermon on amusements was "the rawest thing ever put over in Syracuse." I can not, must not, quote from this sermon, I can only quote a mature and noble woman, a high school teacher, who told me that the sermon was full of evil suggestions concerning innocent pleasures. One fine, clean newspaper writer, of middle age, told me that he heard Mr. Sunday preach his sermon on amusements to a tabernacle full of young people. He told me also that he went to a close friend of Mr. Sunday and told him that he would not preach that sermon to the boys and girls of Syracuse for all the money and all the honor life could bring to him. And yet there are hundreds and thousands here who insist that these raw, vulgar, nasty suggestions are just what our boys and girls need.

This brings us to another impression which I

set down with real regret. Yet it is a real impression. We learned long ago that there are crowds who enjoy at the theater a class of jokes, stories, and suggestions which just border on the questionable and prohibited phases of sex relations. There is a morbid element in the make up of most people. There is a vulgar streak in most men. Women seldom outgrow a certain sentimental, romantic contact with what stirs the immortal spirit of Helen, that lurks in the world like the Wandering Jew. There is not within reach any other explanation why thousands and tens of thousands of women and girls crowded the tabernacle to hear sermons in which the most beautiful and holy impulses of youth and sex were subjected to a kind of slaughter-house or barroom analysis. These sermons appealed to the morbid, even the sensual, which survives under the cover of culture and respectability.

I am indicting no one. I am giving the impressions which have deepened as I have watched and listened and studied with as much detachment as I have been able to cultivate in the midst of such strenuous times. The final impressions set down here will be in a measure favorable. It is only with disgust that one recalls the way the ministers engaged in the Sunday movement have been willing to sit around him week after week and permit him unrebuked

to sneer at them, lampoon them, denounce them, and discredit them and their works. If what he said of them is true they ought to resign and get out, and let some one who is competent take their job. How such men as I have supposed these ministers to be can listen to the withering condemnation of the Biblical criticism in which many of them believe, and of that idea of evolution which only ignorance sneers at, is their affair, not mine, and I leave it to them to settle.

And now comes the curious and interesting impression which seems to contradict all that has been set down. In spite of the fact that the tabernacle service impresses many thoughtful people as almost devoid of religious or spiritual meaning, in spite of the impressions of irreverence which Mr. Sunday often makes, the Sunday meetings have grown in influence to the end. And this influence has grown in unexpected quarters. Take one illustration: St. Paul's Episcopal Church is the cathedral church of Episcopalianism in this neighborhood. The type is clear to all who have come in contact with it. This church did not close for the Sunday meetings. But somehow Mr. Sunday got hold of a lot of men in this church. They went in a body to the tabernacle, headed by one of the oldest, sanest and most loyal Episcopalians in the city. The pastor of the church tells me that the Sunday meetings have touched his men more

than anything that has happened to them during his pastorate in Syracuse.

Along with this incident from the records of St. Paul's goes the other fact. Syracuse has talked religion, for six or seven weeks. There have been two sides to it. "The Age of Reason" has been in demand at the Public Library, along with some other "infidel" books. Sharp critics of Mr. Sunday meet you at every corner. But at the breakfast table, in the street car, on the curb, at the club, the bank, the social gathering, the main topic of conversation is the Sunday meetings and religion as a whole. We have had a season of prayer and praise and condemnation. Letter after letter in the newspapers puts Mr. Sunday along next to Jesus Christ. Sometimes one is indignant at the "God and me" way in which Mr. Sunday disposes of human souls at the tabernacle. He is arrogant, egotistical, intolerant. His stage effects are carefully worked up. What he says goes. It is absolute, final, infallible. The person who dares to differ must keep out of reach or get "his block knocked off." For Mr. Sunday repeatedly says so. We have had a cold bath of intolerance. But for seven weeks we have seen a city of over 150,000 people literally "held up," and made to consider in some measure, at least, the mystery of life and death, and God, and eternity.

V

PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON, in an address before the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, at Columbus, Ohio, a few weeks ago, described an egotist in the following words: "I used to be told when I was a youth that some of the old casuists reduced all sin to egotism. And I have thought as I have watched the career of some individuals that the analysis had some vital point to it. An egotist is a man who has got the whole perspective of life wrong. He conceives of himself as the center of affairs; he conceives of himself as the center of affairs even as affects the providence of God. He has not related himself to the great forces which dominate him with the rest of us, and therefore has set up a little kingdom of his own in which he reigns with unhonored sovereignty."

That is the personal impression of Mr. Sunday as his profile passes into that perspective of yesterday where only the big outlines of things remain clear. The impression deepens as the mind clears itself from entangling details that Mr. Sunday is the most monumental, self-centered egotist that I have ever run across in the

wilderness of this world. If the old casuists were right when they reduced all sin to egotism, then Mr. Sunday is the greatest sinner among us.

It is only when we get down to the very well-springs of his character that we are able to unify such a personality as Mr. Sunday. He is a modern replica of the Zealot. There are two distinct attitudes in him toward sinners. To the submissive, the repentant, he is all smiles, a hail fellow well met. He does not seem to know how to be gentle or sympathetic. This is a note which one seldom catches from his soul. With all his splendid gifts it is doubtful if he could preach a vital sermon on Mr. Moody's texts, "Love never faileth," and "God is love." But nevertheless there is a great big smiling welcome and a glad hand-shake for all who "hit the saw-dust trail."

But if you do not "hit the trail," then watch out for the fire-works, for they are sure to follow. And if you are sensitive you would better go home at this point. For in a moment will come flashing the concentrated scorn and sarcasm of that shout, "Well, go to hell if you want to." He drew a vivid picture of himself meeting Jesus in the world beyond death, where Jesus asks him, "Did you dangle them over hell fire and brimstone, Billy?" "Yes, I did, Lord," and much more like it, answers Billy. There was no more pathetic fact in all this tabernacle

scene, and there is no clearer side-light on the kind of emotions which Mr. Sunday unlooses in his hearers, than the rounds of applause which echoed through that great multitude when he came to the climax of that coarse and irreverent imaginary conversation with Jesus, and jauntily shouted, "To hell with them then." One need but close his eyes, and let memory do its wonderful work, to transport himself in a twinkling to a lumber camp or frontier village of fifty or one hundred years ago, with some exhorter of the old school holding the center of the stage. Ghosts walked in the tabernacle, spirits of the dead came back like Ezekiel's valley of dry bones. And as these ghosts walked, as the ghost of Hamlet's father did, they awoke strange passions and barbaric moods. There flamed the embered fires of ancient animosities, the worn out passions of a dying past. It was a remarkable exhibition of the latent feelings which slumber in the souls of a crowd of average Americans.

The total effect of all this was very impressive, very telling, from one point of view. Jane Addams in that interesting little book on "The Women at the Hague," gives her impressions of Europe during the months of May, June and July, 1915. As she and her associates went from country to country, visiting public men, or gathering about them groups of women to

consider ways and means for preventing war, she became impressed with the feeling that all life and all thinking in Europe were for the present abnormal. She describes this impression by stating that a wave of emotionalism is sweeping over Europe which makes it impossible for people to talk calmly and rationally about government and society and the problems of national existence. In trying to get total impressions of Mr. Sunday at work, there is no better phrase for describing it than that from the start it aims by all the elaborate and carefully arranged details of a splendid organization to start such a wave of emotionalism. And the success or failure of Mr. Sunday in any community will depend upon the height of this wave of emotionalism. In Syracuse it was very high. It was higher here than in Omaha, or so far in Trenton. From all that Mr. Sunday is reported as saying about the meetings in Syracuse there is the impression that in proportion to the size of the city his high water mark is here.

The effect of this wave of emotionalism was twofold. It swept men along with it here in Syracuse who seemed outside the range of any such mood. Here is an instance. Two college men. Six years already in Syracuse. Thirty-five years old. Successful, wholesome, clean men, but not church members. They were swept into the movement. They do not know just

why, even now, but they "hit the trail," and are counted among the converts. They are samples. Not all are college men. Probably relatively few are. But here is a "Billy Sunday Club," composed of business men. And they *are* business men. I know most of them personally. Some of them were "booze fighters." Others stood high in the life of the community. But here they are, and they are already going about, as they say, "to bring men to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ." Just what that saving knowledge is does not seem very clear, but never mind, they are going about the cities and villages of central New York, speaking in churches, and calling on others to "hit the trail." Just what or how much there is in this business many are waiting to see, but, to say the least, it is a very interesting aftermath to the tabernacle services.

And it is a bit abnormal. A friend calls my attention to this fact. He is speaking of our mutual friend, a big, husky, hearty, successful business man. He remarks to me, "He does not seem natural. He acts abnormal. I wonder if he is happy over it. Does he mean it?" This illustrates the abnormal state of feeling which exists through the city. One minister who was in the Sunday combination said to me a few days ago, "I had half expected to resign my pastorate, but I shall not do it. Everything

is abnormal, keyed up, in my church. Some time we must come back to earth, and I must stay here until that crisis is over."

One man said to me the other day, "The worst thing that has ever happened to religion in Syracuse is the organization of the Billy Sunday Business Men's Club. They don't mean it. They won't keep it up. There will be a big slump there some day. And then every critic of religion in the city will sneer."

On the other hand, Mr. Sunday has been away from Syracuse over a month, and even now one must be very guarded when and where he makes any comment on his work, in any spirit of criticism and even of fair play. At a public gathering last night I sat next a university professor. He was not a trail hitter. He has been a church member for years. He is a clear-headed man. But we could not possibly compare notes on Mr. Sunday, with open minds. He thinks the good Mr. Sunday does is so great that we ought to accept his faults without criticism. The remarkable thing is how wide and deep this tide of emotion has run through our city. It is almost an eclipse of reason, a darkening of understanding, as great floods of tempestuous emotionalism obscure the sun. Big and little, high and low, business man and booze fighter, venerable judge and bankrupt politician, came under the spell, and in one way

or another helped to set the whole city vibrating with the thrill of vital emotions and elemental passions. Only years and a careful study of religious life in the city can measure the effect of it all.

One thing is clear from my own experience with trail hitters. Many of them do not associate their new departure with a future devoted to any church or any Christian fellowship. The wave hit them and swept them along. As its impact dies they return to their normal state. Others, and hundreds of them, have been swept over the barriers and are now being fêted and feasted in the churches, like the returned prodigal. Special meetings, receptions, fellowship services, all the social machinery of the churches, have been set in motion to carry them along into the life of the church. Let us hope it will succeed.

But here is a fact from my own notebook. At the end of two weeks, seventeen trail hitters gave the Universalist Church as their preference. Eight of these were boys and girls from our Sunday school, most of them quite young. They were among the hundreds who hit the trail when the tabernacle was crowded with children for a special service. The other nine were adults. None of them was known to me. Some years ago, after the series of meetings under Mr. Chapman, I had sent to me forty-six

cards. I got on my wheel and faithfully hunted those forty-six. The net result of that hunt was just one church member. This time a different plan was tried. I wrote each of the nine, congratulating them all on the stand they had taken and the decision they had made. They were invited to come to our church, make themselves known to me, and make their church home with us. That was over a month ago. Not one of the nine has replied to my letter. Not one has appeared at church services. Not a letter has come back undelivered. On each envelope was my return address. After this experience with the nine, and watching the feverish efforts being made to hold the trail hitters, I wonder how it will all come out. There is no dour face or sour grapes in this. Our congregations are the largest of my long pastorate. Our church is very much alive, thank you. Mr. Sunday did us no harm whatever. I have reason to thank him for at least one fifty-dollar check, which an outsider and radical handed me. And yet I wonder what it all means in the last analysis of spiritual results. I mean to find out if I can, as the months and the years pass.

VI

I AM persuaded that in spite of all his brutality and vulgarity and unchristian speech, Mr. Sunday must have a deep knowledge of human nature. Perhaps I ought to modify that by saying that Mr. Sunday has a keen understanding of the psychology of the crowd. A friend whose judgment is mature has just described to me the scene in the tabernacle when Mr. Sunday preached one of his dreadful sermons on sex immorality. This friend and I have come to know the underworld of our city. We know its vocabulary. We can call a spade a spade. But even this friend says that Mr. Sunday's sermon on the sex question was raw and disgusting. He also heard the famous sermons on amusements and on booze. These are Mr. Sunday's three specialties. In them he goes the limit. My friend says that all in all they were the ugliest, nastiest, most disgusting addresses he ever listened to from a religious platform or from a preacher of religion. He saw people carried out who had fainted under that awful definition of sensuality and depravity. The comment of my friend was this: It

was all wrong to talk that stuff to mixed audiences with boys and girls present. "But," he said, "you and I know from our experience that there are thousands of men and women in this city who deserve and need that kind of stuff. And as for that sermon on booze, it was the most terrific and telling thing I ever heard on the drink question." This man went at my request, that he might give me his impression. He is a Methodist, and a church member. He is not a trail hitter or a Sunday partisan. He feels as I do about the total effect of the Sunday propaganda. Therefore his opinion of the searching effectiveness of Mr. Sunday's talks on questions of personal vice may be taken at their full face value.

This suggests a distinction which ought to be kept clearly in mind. Mr. Sunday's attitude toward vice and sin is almost entirely personal. They sing a parody entitled "The Brewers' Big Horses," but aside from the brewers, no corporate body of men, and no corporate sins, seem to draw his fire effectively. So far as one can observe at present there has been no social effect whatever from Mr. Sunday's sermons, or his work in Syracuse. He handled gambling severely. He denounced card playing strenuously. But one day two university teams played a game of football at the stadium, and 20,000 people were there. Mr. Sunday got

away from the tabernacle before the usual hour. He attended the game. He was one of the lions there. In the evening Rody and he smiled on and welcomed the victorious players. That evening the elevator boy in the block was dejected. "What's the matter?" I said. "I bet six dollars on the wrong team," he said. It is an opinion quite general in the city that more money changed hands on that football game than on anything that has happened in Syracuse in years. There has been no public reference to any instance where any member of the Billy Sunday Club, or any trail hitter, has changed for the better, wages, conditions of labor, or any other of the miserable conditions which some of us know still exist in this city. I have watched for signs that this new Christian consciousness has produced works meet for repentance. There are hundreds of individuals who have for the time being at least, cut out gambling, card-playing, booze, and some other evil habits. Which is all to the good. But so far as affecting the sum total of the moral and spiritual lives of men so that they go down into their pockets, out into their stores and shops and on into society, seeking to exemplify there the principles of justice and righteousness, there are few if any signs of any changes wrought by the Sunday meetings. So student gambling on college games was not seriously affected.

Neither was that dark, damp basement where the employees of a prominent trail hitter are obliged to work with the regular percentage of victims of tuberculosis and associated disease.

This is not condemning the Sunday meetings. It is describing their limitations. And it is bringing us close to another illuminating fact. A fact which most of us forget.

If we study the history of religion carefully we find that what Schleiermacher and Matthew Arnold said of it, from two points of view, is profoundly true. Religion is a hunger, a sense of dependence, it is "morality touched with emotion." It is a passionate, impulsive emotional desire for the divine, for the better life. That church will be potent which feeds these moral emotions. Not by logic, not by argument, but by the power and passion of a great hunger, do men follow their dreams. Down at the bottom of all human experience feeling is more masterful than ideas. Some one may object to this. Very well. Perhaps that one, and a hundred others, are exceptions. But any one who understands the crowd will accept the statement that crowds are moved by impulses, by inspiration, by moving appeal. This is the way the Gospel began. This is the way churches grew. Luther and Calvin and Wesley were human dynamos. At this distance we reduce them to formulas. Where they lived they were

personalities in whom the pent up emotions of vast areas of human experience became centers of illuminating power. They stirred men, moved men, startled men, agonized men by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Those who are familiar with the history of Puritanism, of Methodism, and of most other isms, know that at the beginning they found means for expressing the emotions of men. The whole history of Puritanism in old and in New England is a history of splendid emotionalism. Wesley came at a time when emotionalism was dead in the English Church. He dotted the hillsides and byways of England with sparks of generating power in the form of his itinerant preachers. A study of the history of William Jennings Bryan and Theodore Roosevelt in American politics will illustrate the part that emotion plays everywhere in the life of the crowd. That Cross of Gold Speech won Mr. Bryan the nomination for the Presidency, and the lasting influence of Mr. Roosevelt lies in his instinctive ability for grasping and exploiting those public questions which appeal to the feelings and the emotions of the American people.

I can not take the space for an elaborate analysis of the state of the churches of Protestantism in America, but I can suggest to any interested student a way of approach which

will repay careful study. Emotionalism is practically dead in the religious services of most Protestant churches. There are few things more monotonous and uninspiring than the average Sunday morning service in the average church. A dead level respectability, a carefully groomed convention of good manners, prevent any outbreak. Even the slightest applause would shock the worshipers. These come from places in life where all men are free to give vent to feeling. They shout, laugh, cheer, or curse as the mood prompts. But here where all life's petty interests are lost in the contemplation of life's vast mysteries, a cold, calm chill of restraint and conventionality prevents any sign of emotion. How the soul does yearn for some voice for its cry! What unutterable longings are stifled! Who can tell the awful turmoil of this storm-beaten sinner who sits quietly while the preacher discusses some far-fetched dogma of a forgotten past, or some problem of Scripture born not of the agony and sweat of temptation but of the schoolman's casuistry!

And nobody seems to know how to break away. The preacher would like to. He would like to say some real things. Sometimes he does, in spots. But as a whole the long, dry fingers of a dead hand grip his church and his soul, while sinners and burdened souls come and go unfed. Again I do not condemn. I describe

the impression that is real in me. And I prepare the way for an understanding of Mr. Sunday.

A whisper goes round among the ministers that out in the West is a man, a raw man, a crude man, a man that can do what they can not do. Get him. He will break through. We fifty will close up for seven weeks and let him try it. So they get him. He knows his job. He has studied it twenty years. He knows his churches, his preachers, his crowd. He comes. All things are prepared. He walks over the churches and the preachers. He walks on them. He hammers them. He cries their Higher Criticism to the devil, from whom he says it was born. He sweeps away all the cobwebs of scholarship, all the careful conventions and good manners of the Sunday morning service. He goes at them with his fists. He pounds them, sticks a knife into them. He draws blood. It is painful, but they begin to feel. They are alive. No man ever got them like that. How he enjoys watching them squirm. They are astonished, shocked, hurt. But they come again. They can not keep away. And so they come. And so women faint, and men curse, and some almost sweat blood. But they keep coming. They know they are sinful, guilty, impure. They know that booze or lust is cursing them. They cry, silently perhaps, from the very depths

of hell. Here is no smug respectability. Here is a man who hits hard and spares not. Or they are church slackers who pretend, who never did an honest day's work for Jesus since they joined the church. How he does administer to them the hot blasts of his withering sarcasm. Sometimes he literally makes the corrupt man or woman sick at the stomach by his nasty descriptions of their vices. Sometimes he swings out in a mighty appeal to them to clean up and get back their self-respect and "get right with God." These are the touches of a master hand on the elemental passions and emotions. Of the thousands who hit the trail not all are like these. Many are children who are out of place in the crowd. Others are moved by curiosity and are swept along with the crowd. But among the crowd are hundreds and perhaps thousands who in one way or another have been morally and spiritually awakened, for the present at least. These go down the trail with the honest desire and a new resolution to cut out lust and booze, to stop gambling, and to become followers of Jesus Christ.

It is the plain truth, written all over the tabernacle services, that here is a place where, under the magic wand of Rody and the rampant oratory of Mr. Sunday, the pent-up, dried up, repressed emotions of the crowd are let loose in songs and laughter and tears and spasms of ap-

plause. Under their skins they have wanted for a long time to frolic like this. They are spiritual children out of school for a day. They are going to enjoy a season of worship out here away from the formal and conventional shadow of the church spire. This is the primeval mood. This is the way men gathered when the world was young. Reader, have you ever attended a real Rotary Club lunch, where hundreds of solid business men turn themselves loose for a frolic? Well, if you have not you have missed something. Mr. Sunday came to our Rotary Club lunch. Four hundred young business men, the future of business in Syracuse, were there. In five minutes he and Rody had that crowd which packed the rathskeller to the doors. They were perfectly at home. The tabernacle and the Rotary Club perform an almost identical service for men. The church has lost the sense of immortal youth. Mr. Sunday is right when he slashes a great open-mouthed laugh, a rattling story, a fine joke, a call for the class yell or the mighty chorus of "the brewer's big horses can't run over me," across the somber monotony of much that is lifeless and uninspiring in the conventional habits of pietism. With a fine instinct of what is good for the crowd, ministers whose own churches are withered, and are dying of dry rot, permitted their sense of propriety and decency to be outraged, and swallowed it

all with their pride, hoping that somehow this human cyclone of emotionalism could get to the soul of the crowd. And until we settle somehow, ourselves, with these emotional demands which are the deepest need of every awakened human soul, we will be forced to reckon with the kind of thing which Mr. Sunday is "putting over" in city after city throughout the United States.

VII


MANY criticisms of and apologies for Mr. Sunday and his methods miss that which is central and fundamental in all that he does. Only yesterday a keen and experienced newspaper man remarked to me that if Mr. Sunday would stop talking his crude theology, and stick to the line of ideas outlined in his sermons on amusements, lust, and booze, he could do more good than he is doing now. A minister who was in the Sunday movement said that he was thoroughly disgusted with Mr. Sunday's bigotry and his ignorance in matters of theology. He did wish the friends of Mr. Sunday could persuade him to stick to those moral issues where he was so effective. These are samples of fifty conversations within the last two months. They are all the result of a very superficial study of the whole situation.

If we approach the matter from a careful study of the contents of Mr. Sunday's personality as these influence his way of doing things and of saying things, it soon becomes clear that his effectiveness is the result of heat, not of light. Take his passion from him and he would

be stale and commonplace as a preacher. Even his printed sermons are very weak in ideas. They are a mass of hortatory utterances, most of them very practical and very direct, from Mr. Sunday's point of view. Their vitality and penetrating power depend almost entirely upon the drive behind. Mr. Sunday drives his tacks with a sledgehammer. That is what the crowd enjoys. When he hits some imaginary tack, or head, so hard that the sparks fly or the head sees stars, then the crowd applauds, and is sometimes wild with enthusiasm. So Mr. Sunday lays about him with his theological sledgehammer until the air is full of sparks and heat. Rob him of those theological tacks or that theological sledgehammer and he would be limp, and the tension would relax. It is while he is raising a very fury of passion over some difference of doctrine that he dangles people over hell and makes his mighty appeal for moral decency. And at such times he is a real Titan laying about him with the giant strength of a very gifted and powerful nature. No, he would be a shorn Samson without his long-haired, antiquated theology. If you have Mr. Sunday as he is and in power you must take him as he is, bigotry included.

Then there is the church side of the problem. Mr. Sunday has his own sins to answer for, but he must not be made a scapegoat for the

sins of the churches. They sent after Mr. Sunday for a very definite purpose. Those fifty and more churches wanted him to come to Syracuse and bring a lot of outsiders into their membership. Behind this motive were others, some of them nobler than this selfish one. But it was this motive, primarily, that caused those churches to send for Mr. Sunday. They wanted him for a very specific job. It was that job, and what it promised in increased church membership, that enabled him to insist that all those churches must close all the time he was here, except on Monday, when there was no service at the tabernacle. Any program for a series of meetings such as Mr. Sunday held in Syracuse must include and center around the idea of recruits for the churches. That Mr. Sunday understands, and so he shapes his whole movement to that end. The theological motive is fundamental in any such aim. If Mr. Sunday should confine himself to moral issues he could not herd his sheep in the folds where they were wanted. If he could not herd the sheep in the folds where they were wanted those folds would never close up temporarily, and let him have the whole field to himself. And so Mr. Sunday uses his sledgehammer of theological dogmatism to drive his frightened flock under cover. He lashes, he denounces, he threatens, he whips up a great tempest of passionate intolerance, he



shouts that the ideas of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are born of the devil. Which all means in the last analysis, that Mr. Sunday is doing with all his might the thing which he knows the churches want him to do, and which he must do if he gets their support.

If to-morrow morning Mr. Sunday should decide to turn his attention to those moral and ethical problems involved in his sermons on amusements, lust, and booze, and leave the question of church membership to one side while he is trying to morally regenerate men and women, not ten churches in all Syracuse would close up and give him the floor. The churches have no public opinion in them to justify such a move. Even if the ministers wanted to, the congregations would refuse, and it is very doubtful if any large percentage of the ministers would favor such action. In other words, public opinion in the churches is self-centered. The social consciousness which thinks in terms of moral and ethical city life is absent from most of the churches. They are still busy saving individual souls in the old way. Which means that they are trying to increase their church membership. Which means that the question whether the churches will join in sending for Mr. Sunday, and close up while he is here, will depend not upon how many booze fighters he

will persuade to stop drinking, but how many of them he can persuade to join some church. Therefore it is clear that Mr. Sunday is what he is, works as he does, indulges in all his ranting, tearing passion about theological teachings and ideas, concerning which he is very crude, just because temperamentally he fits into it, and just because he is able in this manner to do the thing which he is expected to do, fill up the ranks of church membership with new recruits.

I am explaining this situation carefully in order that we may understand that the Sunday movement must be considered from all points. It is a complex phenomenon. Mr. Sunday is the product of a crude revivalism. He was "converted," in much the same way that he "converts" others. By a process of natural selection he has become the representative of that system. It is a system which once prevailed widely among the churches. The system, that is "revivalism," as many of us were familiar with it in our youth, has almost died out except in the Southern states. It was the chief source of increase in church membership for most of the Protestant churches. As it died out it left these churches almost helpless. No new system was developed to take its place. The churches did not know how, and many of them do not even now know how to adapt them-

selves to the new conditions. The result has been and still is dwindling membership, decreased income, and a mighty cry for help. Mr. Sunday is the answer to that cry. He represents the last and greatest effort so far made to revive and vitalize a dying method of increasing the members and the income of the churches. He is what he is, and this movement is what it is, because there meet in his vital and vibrant personality a deep personal experience, with a great desire of the Protestant churches. It is all one piece. No matter how crude the personal experience of religion may be in a human soul, to that soul it is very real. No matter how selfish the churches may be in their desires in this Sunday movement, those desires express a cry for help which echoes through Protestant Christendom.

I am often asked if Mr. Sunday is sincere. Of course he is sincere. The churches also are sincere. But he acts, he poses, he appropriates other men's sermons? Certainly a trained observer will soon discover that those fits and that falling on the floor, and a hundred other devices, have been very carefully rehearsed. He does carry away a lot of money. He does like gifts of fur coats and other fine things. And it is reported that many of the pictures of "Billy Sunday in Action," are what the newspaper calls "faked." That is, they are probably taken

out back of the house, or "behind the barn," rather than when he is really in action on the tabernacle platform. This is all a part of the advertising scheme. It is magnificently done. It helps Mr. Sunday "put it over," as the editor remarks.

But all this does not settle the matter. Theodore Roosevelt is a pretty fine actor. So was Henry Ward Beecher, and so was Dr. Talmage. But these men were sincere. So is Mr. Sunday. The whole tabernacle business is a gigantic hippodrome affair. It is the biggest show on earth. It is better advertised, better organized, better elaborated in its scenic effects, than any other show I ever witnessed. All that is true, but at the center of this gigantic play stands a man who is the creator and inspirer of it all. He believes that yesterday, here in the tabernacle, was the greatest day since Pentecost. Does he believe that? Of course he does. No living man could do what Mr. Sunday does until he had convinced himself, at least, that the thing is real. Men can persuade themselves of many things if it is for their interest to do so. The man who goes on that tabernacle platform and for seven weeks raves, rages, stamps, shouts, jumps, and "throws a fit" every little while over some one who differs with his theology, or over some petty crotchet of his own imagination, must believe what he says. The strain must be

tremendous. It does not seem as though any man could survive it more than a few years. It is a mighty tornado of passion and of dreadful fears, sweeping along those tremendous moral appeals, and carrying the whole movement by the exhausting labors of this fanatic. Where will it end? Almost certainly with the breakdown somewhere, of this stormy petrel of rampant revivalism. But is this all? What reflections about how to deal with this vast religious inertia of the churches rise in one as he muses over the things which are associated with the Sunday movement and the insistent personality which dominates it all! In one more article which will close this somewhat extended study of Mr. Sunday and his methods, I wish to suggest some of these reflections.

VIII

IN this final chapter of my study of Mr. Sunday and his work I am going to try to point out some of the lessons we may learn from him and from what he does. I am doing this upon the assumption that those who believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, yet shrink from the crude and even brutal irreverence of Mr. Sunday, have intelligence enough to discriminate between things that are different even when mixed by such a master hand as Mr. Sunday. He does a very definite and real thing for tens of thousands. He gathers up these fragments of congregations from fifty churches. He takes them away from their narrow rut and dry-as-dust conventionalities. He brings them all together in the tabernacle. He melts them, mixes them, blends them into a Church, One Church. For the time being Protestantism loses one of its pitiable characteristics. These fifty churches were jealous of each other yesterday. To-morrow, in Omaha at least, they will quarrel over the spoils of victory, called "converts." The strictest rules will be necessary to prevent the big fish from eating up the little fish. But for to-day, for this seven weeks, all roads lead to that big low building out in the field, where

Rody and Billy will do their very best to make them sing and pray and shout as one people. The result is plain for one who watches and listens. For seven weeks over fifty churches were almost forgotten by the public, while tens of thousands vibrated with a sense of common fellowship. It was as though these tens of thousands marched, keeping step, from east and west and north and south, toward a common center. To use a familiar word, Mr. Sunday mobilized the units of organized Protestant Christianity as they were never co-ordinated before in Syracuse. Everybody felt it. Everybody talked about it. All Syracuse went out to hear Mr. Sunday as all Jerusalem and Judea went out to hear John at the ford of the Jordan. And in spite of his sarcasm, his denunciation, his plain brutality of speech—or was it by the help of this with the crowd?—Mr. Sunday did thrill these tens of thousands with a vision of their power when they were really one. He did give thousands of dull, conventional, unspiritual church-goers and non-church-goers a galvanic shock which made them sit up and join the chorus and sense the deeper meaning of some of life's great and neglected interests.

Have I gone over to Mr. Sunday? All in all, would I consider him a religious or spiritual asset? Well, the back wash hit my church. Yesterday a very intelligent vestryman of the

Cathedral Episcopal Church said, "Mr. Sunday did us a great deal of good." In both instances it was somewhat by the law of repulsion that the effect was worked, but it shows how impossible it is to ignore Mr. Sunday and what he does. The whole movement is worked up. To the keen observer many of its details are like the machinery of any other splendidly organized spectacular performance. It will take years to outgrow the intolerance Mr. Sunday awakened in Syracuse. There will be a slump some day. These are a few of the shady aspects of the subject.

There is one more shadow, which is the worst of all. Mr. Sunday brought with him a method of propagating religion which is more like the organization of the sales department of a big concern than he would perhaps admit. This adaptation of a keen "drummer's" method of marketing his goods caught the attention of many who already knew how to use it in their own business. The result is that central New York is being "drummed" for religion by a group of men who impress one still as "drummers." The thing does not ring true. A suspicion of pretense, of hypocrisy, of unreality, echoes through it all. If this is a just estimate, then that one thing would make it impossible for any lover of honesty in spiritual things to help Mr. Sunday or anybody else create an

atmosphere of emotionalism in which such a travesty upon the religion of Jesus could flourish.

But here is the situation. Given the churches as they are, given the state of spiritual lethargy in these churches, given divided Protestantism, given the lack of inspiration in the average church service, given the spiritual needs of real men and women, there is a condition which makes the coming of Mr. Sunday like a great storm out of the mountains across the sunburned corn fields and the withering grass lands of a drought-stricken prairie. So long as they live thousands of those tabernacle devotees will look upon that experience as a period of refreshing, if nothing more. For a little time they belonged to a big thing, and that big thing was Religion to them, whatever it may be to the rest of us.

Therefore it is very clear to me that any antidote or substitute for the Sunday movement, with all its evils and excesses, must start with a recognition of spiritual needs which are neglected or unfed in ordinary church worship. Take the singing. It was overdone, for the trained ear, at the tabernacle, but it is underdone in churches. There was more inspiration for the average man or woman in Roddy with his voice and horn than in any church choir or classic church music in Christendom. In Mr.

Sunday's work music is splendidly manipulated for a legitimate purpose. Rody takes ten thousand atoms, called individuals, and makes them one, unifies them, until they are like a grand organ of ten thousand parts upon which Mr. Sunday proceeds to play. Then take Mr. Sunday's personality. He can capture a crowd quicker than any man I ever listened to, after Rody has them ready. The Rotary Club is made up of over 300 keen business men. He touched that crowd off like a fuse, with a friction match. There were 1400 Masons and their wives in the group I marched with to the tabernacle. Not a half dozen "hit the trail," but Mr. Sunday got them and touched them off with laughter and applause within thirty seconds from his start. All was ready, of course, but not one preacher in ten thousand could do the thing as he did, and follow it up. It is his remarkable human touch which does it. He gets to his hearer as a drummer gets to his customer. He gets to him. He does not wait for his hearer. He goes after him, hammer and tongs and pincers. He flays him, he lampoons him, and then he hits him in the heart somewhere.

What are the ways of meeting the problem of Mr. Sunday and the raw and repelling features of his work? The answer is to be looked for in ways and means for giving natural and normal expression to the emotional life of

men and women. First of all, our regular church services should be studied with care. As now conducted in most churches they repress emotion, they stifle feeling. Our church music is not as a whole any great help to worship for the ordinary man or woman. Rody is an example of what one man can do to bring unity into a vast congregation. And Rody is always a gentleman. By a little adaptation he could make the dry bones of the deadest congregation rattle quite lively. Why can not we do this ourselves? Or does conventionality bind our spiritual sensibility like a Chinese woman's feet? The Sunday school that sings is alive. So is the church congregation that sings. If the music in our churches was noble but simple, and really congregational, it would be emotional, and it would go a long way to solve one part of our problem.

Another part of the problem could be solved. We have here in Syracuse an Arena where our great Music Festival is held each May. It will hold more people than are in all of those fifty odd churches which were in the Sunday movement, on any one Sunday evening. There are over 200 singers in the choirs of those churches. These singers include all our best soloists. Leave out, if necessary, a half dozen of the churches. Let me have the rest of the churches, with their choirs, for Sunday evenings, and I

will agree to pack that Arena to the doors. Let me pick out the leader of the chorus, and the speaker for the evening, and I will promise to arouse an enthusiasm and develop a unity as vital as Mr. Sunday did. In this there is no thought of any particular theology. There is only an appreciation of the *permanent emotional value* of such a movement. And the movement can be brought to the high level of rich, broad, inclusive sympathy, as against Mr. Sunday's narrow and intolerant bigotry. If those fifty odd churches could be induced to turn the footsteps of their meager evening congregations toward the Arena, and if when there they were met with a chorus of 200 voices, fine soloists, and a local edition of Rody, which we have in Syracuse, I do not even risk my reputation as a prophet in saying that the result would be a spiritual awakening, a growth of Christian unity, and a moral overturning which could be carried on through the years. Let any one who doubts this take a little journey in the world and get a hint from the Ford Hall meetings in Boston, and the open forum movement as it is expanding. The thought is not to make over the church into an open forum. The thought is to take over the secrets of the power of the open forum into the life of the church, along with that emotional quickening which is, after all, the source of all spiritual experience.

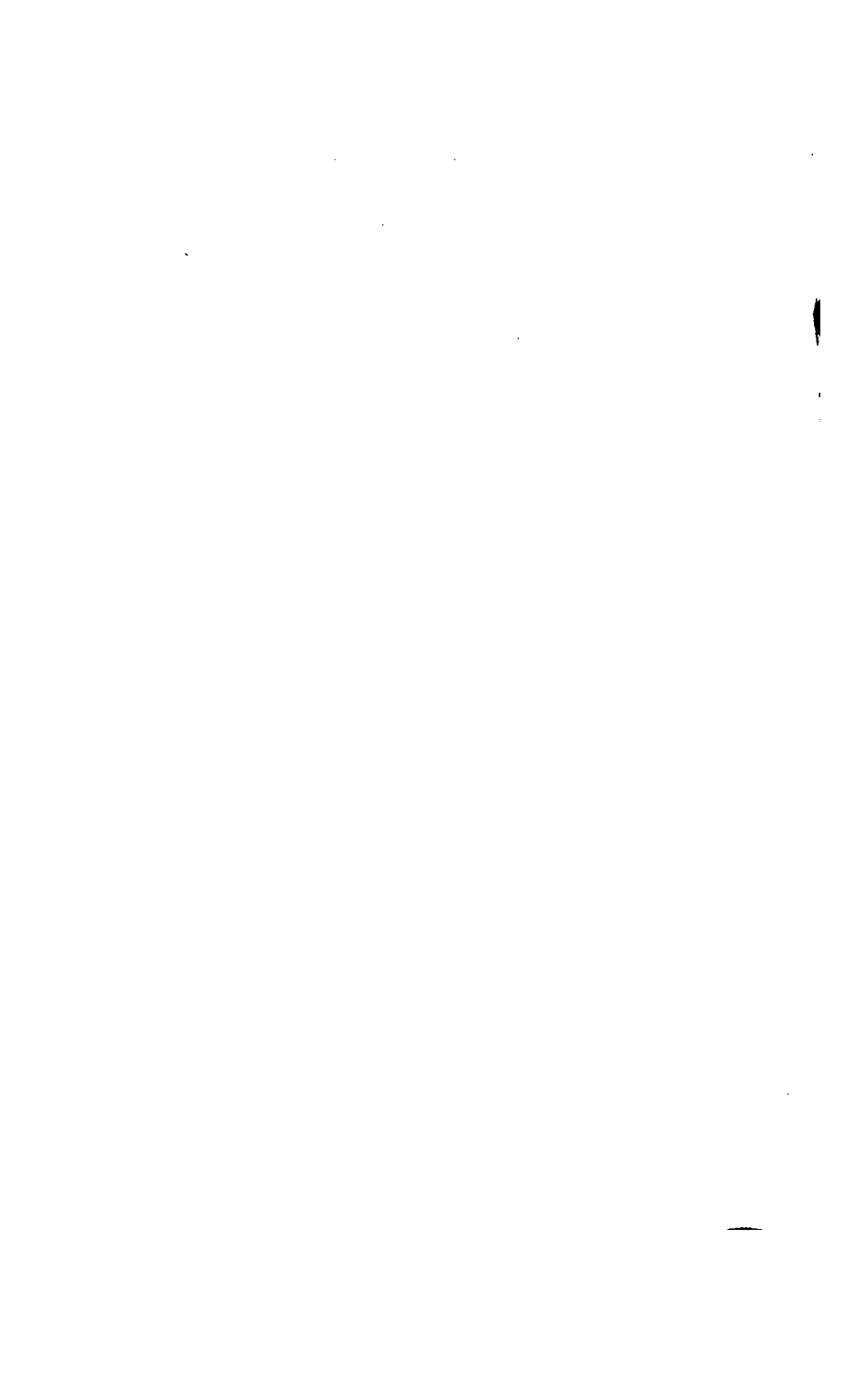
And now, in conclusion, there is one thought which lies at the back of my mind in this whole study of Mr. Sunday and his methods, and of some better way of doing what he does. Down deep in the whole matter lies the fact that the churches need regeneration. There is no space for describing the influences which have brought us where we are, but we are where we are. Anarchy between the churches in extension work, economic changes in society, narrow social cults within the churches, and a great fear of radicalism, are among the forces which have narrowed the vision of the churches. Competition urges them to drastic policies. The need of increased income is great. The outcome is self-interest. Everything must be made to count for the church. The average church is as selfish in its policy as the average business house. It is looking for customers. It wants to sell its goods. Again I repeat that this is not an indictment. It is a description.

The churches must be socialized. They must become seed-sowers. They must cast their bread upon the waters. They must be convinced of the supreme value of spiritual nurture. They must have faith to live as Christ lived, serving, and let results take care of themselves. They must come to see that the church which lives for the community can leave its future to the community with perfect confidence.

The church must put itself into a new relationship with society. It must ask what it can give, not what it can get. It must breed in the city where it stands splendid confidence in its unselfish desires. This will not bring a crowd. Confidence is a plant of slow growth. But when it grows it becomes the greatest of all trees, and under it people come for rest and help.

If I dared, I would like to close what I have set down with a personal illustration, but of one's own experience one should speak with reserve. Suffice it that what has been written has come out of my own life work. This is my twenty-seventh year in the city where Mr. Sunday tabernacled seven weeks. During all those years we have tried to live up to that vision of service. There were lean years, long years, before the city could believe, but here at the end of the road, in the midst of all this competition and this reawakened intolerance, I want to bear witness that the church which dares to preserve its democracy, its sympathy, its social vision, and its desire to serve, is like the man who built his house upon a rock, where the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew, and beat upon it, but it fell not because it was founded on a rock. Such a church will not need the services of Mr. Sunday or any other evangelistic itinerant to save it from financial or spiritual ruin.

THE END



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BETTS, Frederick William

AUTHOR

Billy Sunday, the man

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